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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3219
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9550
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 6024
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9134
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 4060
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2963
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0830
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0198
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3048
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2120
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4480
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6575
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000672

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2016

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: SUSPECTED LTTE SUICIDE BOMBER ATTEMPTS
TO KILL ARMY CHIEF IN CAPITAL; EAC MEETS

REF: COLOMBO 661 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMB. JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Army Commander Lt. General Sarath Fonseka was injured April 25 in an assassination attempt by a suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) suicide bomber at Army Headquarters in Colombo. As many as eight people, many of them members of Fonseka's security detail, may have been killed in the attack. Embassy recommends the Department issue a statement strongly condemning this and other acts of violence and urging both the Government and LTTE to take all necessary measures to halt the violence. Suggested points follow in Para 6 below. The Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met on April 25 and determined the Embassy's current security posture is appropriate. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On April 25 a suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) suicide bomber attempted to kill Army Commander Lt. General Sarath Fonseka as his vehicle was leaving Army Headquarters in Colombo at about 1350 local time. The Army Chief was injured in the explosion and has been taken to the hospital. The suicide bomber, Fonseka's driver, and as many as six others, including members of the General's security detail, were reportedly killed in the blast, while another 27 were injured. There were no reports of Americans killed or injured in the attack.

¶3. (C) Initial reports indicate that the female suicide bomber, who was reportedly dressed in a Sri Lanka Army maternity uniform, was standing near the entrance of the Army Hospital, which Fonseka's convoy was driving past on its way out of the Army Headquarters compound. According to a reliable Army source, the bomber jumped on Fonseka's vehicle and detonated explosives concealed under the maternity uniform. (Tuesdays are apparently the day when pregnant Army personnel and dependents come to the Army hospital for check-ups. According to an Army source, the patients are not searched when they enter the Army Headquarters compound on which the hospital is located.)

¶4. (SBU) The attack marks the first assassination attempt against a prominent Government figure in Colombo since the August 12 killing of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. Colombo and outlying areas remained calm in the hours immediately following the attack. There were no reports of unrest in the eastern district of Trincomalee, the site of several recent incidents of communal violence (Reftel) or elsewhere.

¶5. (C) Fonseka, who has a reputation as a hardliner, was appointed Army Commander in November by newly elected President Mahinda Rajapaksa. (Fonseka had been scheduled to retire the next month; his service was extended with the appointment.) As a Colonel, Fonseka had served with Rajapaksa's younger brother and current Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa in Jaffna. Rising through the ranks, the future Army Chief returned to Jaffna as Security Forces Commander for a three-month stint in 2000 and again from 2002-2003, where he earned the admiration of Sinhalese nationalists for his tough line against the LTTE.

¶6. (SBU) The Embassy suggests the Department issue a statement making the following points:

--The US condemns the LTTE's attempted assassination of Lt. General Sarath Fonseka;

--We urge the LTTE to cease immediately its terrorist tactics;

--We call on both the Government and the LTTE to take all necessary steps to halt violence and restore a safe and secure environment for all Sri Lankans.

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¶7. (C) The Ambassador chaired an Emergency Action Committee (EAC) meeting April 25 which was attended by representatives of the Consular, Management, Defense Attache Office, Regional Affairs, USAID, Political and Economic sections, as well as the Regional Security Officer. After discussion it was determined that the current security status of the Embassy is appropriate. Post will monitor the situation and make changes as necessary.
LUNSTEAD